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SUBJECT: OECD DSG AT BRAZIL KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

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¶1. OECD Deputy Secretary General Thelma Askey spoke at a conference in Brasilia, the "Fourth International Conference on Knowledge Management in the Public Sector" on December 11. The Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, Planning Ministry, Presidential Council for Economic Development, and Long-Term Planning Secretariat organized the conference with the Brazilian Association of Knowledge Management (SBGC). The conference explored how better to incorporate knowledge management into public administration in Brazil, drawing on local and international experiences and lessons learned. The conference considered the definitions of "knowledge management," noted its effects on economic growth, and examined the specific situation in Brazil. Other speakers included the Brazilian Minister of Science and Technology, the head of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, and the Casa Civil (Presidency) E-Government office. End Summary.

SAMPLING OF BRAZILIAN SPEAKERS

¶2. Arlindo Chinaglia, Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies, opened the conference. He noted knowledge management, with origins in the corporate sector, proves its value in the public sector if it helps improve the quality of services to the population. He noted the website Interlegis (www.interlegis.gov.br), developed by the Brazilian congress with IDB assistance, is an example of knowledge management. The website furthers government transparency and information sharing by facilitating public access to congressional activities and legislation.

¶3. Sergio Resende, Minister of Science and Technology, noted that knowledge management is a challenge to Brazil's public sector mainly due to systemic education problems. As an example, masters and PhD programs in the United States have existed for 150 years, while in Brazil these programs began 40 years ago according to the minister. Brazilian corporations' knowledge management challenges now include innovation and research and development. The Minister added that the Brazilian Innovation Law provides subsidies for investment in technology, including e-government. Rogerio Santana, Executive Secretary for e-government at the Casa Civil, Presidency of the

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Republic, expanded on this theme, saying knowledge management includes both what people know and how they share their information. He mentioned the importance of a public software website, administered by his office, offering free software to assist local administrations throughout the country. Santana noted as well that knowledge management is not only the federal government pushing information out to local entities. Knowledge management also means creating opportunities for local-level talent, including indigenous and riverside cultures, to enrich federal level decision-making.

¶4. Federal Deputy Gastao Vieira, Education Committee Chairman, further developed the education theme, strongly asserting Brazil needs to implement a literacy program for elementary schools, drawing on best-practices at state level for educational reform. He noted a 2003 GOB report that found teacher training programs in Brazil are thirty years out of date. The deputy felt the poor performance of Brazilian students on the OECD PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) exams reflected the lack of investment in education and Brazil's failure to set a few achievable priorities (e.g. an adequate syllabus, teacher training, and materials investment) instead of myriad overambitious goals. He commented that knowledge management and international trade are also linked, as increased know-how raises exported products' value-added and trade itself increases knowledge acquisition.

OECD DSG ASKEY

¶5. Thelma Askey, OECD Deputy Secretary-General, spoke on a panel entitled "The Public Policy of Knowledge Management and the Agenda of Global Development" with Maristela Baioni, program coordinator in Brazil for UNDP. Askey underlined that knowledge management is among OECD governments' top five policy priorities. OECD identifies and shares best practices in order to enhance this global public good for all countries. OECD knowledge management goals include: 1) helping members adapt to change; 2) opening communication channels; 3) furthering investment in higher education and in information technologies; and 4) promoting integration and exchanges among academic institutions, the private sector and the public sector.

¶6. DSG Askey noted that the OECD has an indicator for measuring investment in knowledge, and that OECD member countries invest, on average, nearly six percent of GDP in knowledge development and management. Investment mechanisms include e-government structures; higher education; development and implementation of research systems, databases and internet platforms; and partnerships among governments. Askey stressed that, for the public sector, investment in knowledge management should target building public trust, for example through creation of reliable, independent statistics

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agencies. Askey advocated that governments should create incentives for knowledge sharing and should stress transparency and policy coherence. Ms. Askey concluded by reiterating the importance of coordination among private sector, academic and public sector institutions, as well as the importance of sharing experiences and lessons learned among countries.

¶7. COMMENT: The conference provided an important opportunity for Brazilian government, academia and international organizations to share perspectives on increasing transparency and investment in knowledge in a democracy. The event, co-planned by Brazil's executive and legislative branches with civil society participation, was an interesting and informative step in Brazil's on-going public sector reform dialogue. END COMMENT

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